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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services ongoing evaluation of local School Resources Office (SRO) programs. Evaluation data were obtained from 3,244 Student Incident Reports (SIR), a survey of 2,067 school staff, a survey of 11,864 middle school and high school students, and 104 SRO quarterly Activities Reports. Of all SIR reported incidents, 48% were crimes against persons; 18% were property crimes; 10% were drug related; and 2% were gang related. The incidents occurred primarily outside the school building, in classrooms, and in school corridors. The average number of incidents per middle school grade was higher than that per high school grade. Nine types of offenses accounted for 68% of the incidents. Eight-five percent of the offenders were students, and 76% of these were male; 24% of the victims were school staff, and 50% of all victims were female. Quarterly reports provided evidence that SROs are actively pursuing the goals and objectives associated with their designated roles. SROs are also gaining acceptance as players in school disciplinary processes and are increasing the usage of school and community resources for resolving conflict, adding victims, and reducing the destructive impulses of at-risk youth. Overall, Virginia's SRO programming was found to be strongly endorsed by students and staff and vitally active as a force against school-based crime. (MKA)

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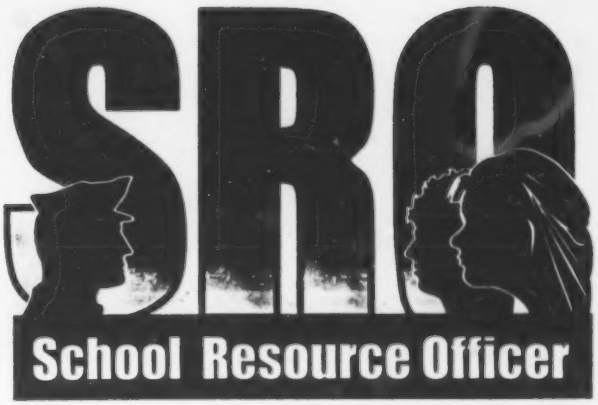

Evaluation of Grant Funded School Resource Officer Programs

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March 2000

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services' (DCJS) ongoing evaluation of local School Resource Officer (SRO) programs. The evaluation was authorized by the Office of the Governor (OGOV). Its primary goals were to obtain information on the extent and nature of school-based crime, the implementation and operation of local SRO programs, and the activities SROs undertake to fulfill their designated roles. It was also designed to obtain benchmark data for use in future evaluations.

All of the SRO programs evaluated received grants of federal monies from DCJS or OGOV. These grants were active between July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999, and were monitored by the DCJS SRO Program Manager. Research analysts of DCJS' Crime Prevention Center (CPC) conducted the evaluation. Initial guidance was provided by PolicyWorks, Ltd., a consulting firm retained by OGOV. The research focused primarily on SRO activity between January and July 1999, a period in which 55 DCJS-monitored grants supported 58 SROs in 41 localities.

Evaluation data was obtained from 3,244 Student Incident Reports (SIRs), a survey of 2,067 school staff, a survey of 11,864 middle-school and high-school students, and 104 SRO Quarterly Activities Reports. These reports and surveys were submitted to DCJS by SROs as a condition of the grants that funded their positions. The analysis of this data revealed the following:

Findings from the Student Incident Report (SIR) Data

48% of all SIR-reported incidents were crimes against persons; 18% were property crimes; 10% were drug related; and 2% were gang related. The incidents occurred primarily outside the school building (31%), in classrooms (24%), and in school corridors (19%). The average number of incidents per middle-school grade was higher than that per high-school grade.

Nine types of offenses accounted for 68% of the incidents: use or possession of tobacco (19%), disorderly conduct (14%), profanity (8%), verbal threatening (6%), truancy (6%), trespassing (4%), possession of drugs (4%), larceny (4%), and vandalism (3%).

85% of the offenders were students and 76% of these offenders were male. 24% of the victims were school staff, and 50% of all victims were female.

Findings from the Student and School Staff Survey Data

Both the students and school staff members reported that they felt safe while at school. 78% of the students and 85% of the staff reported feeling either "somewhat" or "very" safe at school. Slightly lower feelings of safety were found among the female and urban sub-samples of these groups.

24% of the staff said they were "somewhat" or "very" fearful that intruders would victimize them. A smaller percentage reported such fear when they assessed the possibility of being victimized by gang members (13%), students (11%) or parents (6%). Staff and students felt most vulnerable in places where students congregated freely and where school staff might be absent (parking lots, hallways, bathrooms, stairwells, cafeterias, locker rooms, etc.).

35% of the students and 15% of the staff reported that, in the past six months, items had been stolen from their desks or other places. 14% of the staff had property purposely damaged and 12% said they had been threatened with physical harm.

SROs are a welcome presence in schools. 90% of all staff "strongly agreed" with the statement: "I support having a SRO assigned to my school." This level of support was found among all sub-samples (urban-suburban-rural, male-female, and middle-high school) and was even higher among staff who had relatively more frequent

or longer contact with SROs. 6% of the staff simply "agreed" with the statement and 4% said they were neutral on the issue.

Findings from the SRO Quarterly Activity Report (QAR) Data

The QAR's provided substantial evidence that SROs are actively pursuing the goals and objectives associated with their designated roles. They are participating in school security assessments, applying CPTED principles to reduce the probability of crime, developing school crime prevention policies (critical incident, weapons, intruder, etc.), instructing legal education classes, intervening in conflicts before they involve *Code* violations, increasing the level of student supervision, counseling troubled students, developing crime information networks, and involving students and staff in crime prevention activities.

SROs are also gaining acceptance as players in school disciplinary processes and are increasing the usage of school and community resources for resolving conflict, aiding victims, and reducing the destructive impulses of at-risk youth.

While some SROs noted factors that impeded their efforts to perform certain roles and functions, the staff survey provided evidence that SRO acceptance and inclusion increases as the frequency and the duration of SRO contact increases. In summary, Virginia's grant-funded, state-administered SRO programming was found to be increasingly professional, strongly endorsed by students and staff, and vitally active as a force against school-based crime.

Introduction

This report presents findings from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services' (DCJS) ongoing evaluation of local School Resource Officer (SRO) programs. All of the programs evaluated received grants of federal monies from DCJS or the Director of the Governor's Office for Safe and Drug-Free Schools (GOSDFS) during the period July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999. These grants were monitored by the DCJS SRO Program Manager. Research analysts of the DCJS Crime Prevention Center (CPC) conducted the evaluation. The research focused on SRO activity between January and July 1999, a period in which 55 DCJS-monitored grants supported 58 SROs in 41 localities.[1]

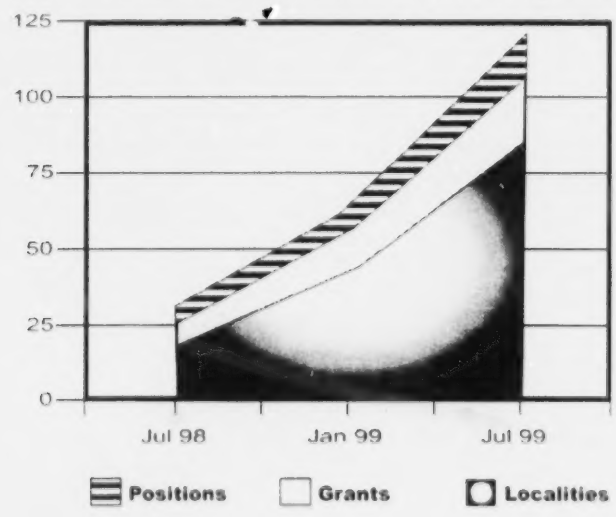
> **"One of the most important aspects of any grant program is the evaluation. Without solid, quality evaluation we cannot prove program effectiveness..."**
>
> *- Mary-Shea Sutherland*
> *Director, Governor's Office for Safe and Drug Free Schools*

Rationale for the Evaluation

DCJS' role in the administration of SRO programs has grown dramatically (see Chart 1). Between July 1, 1998 and July 1, 1999, the number of DCJS-monitored SRO grants increased from 24 to 111, the number of grant-funded SRO positions rose from 32 to 119, localities served by grant-funded SROs jumped from 20 to 83, and the amount of grant money awarded for SROs went from $730,000 to $2,315,000.

Chart 1

Growth of DCJS Monitored SRO Programs



[1] Although 57 grants supporting 63 positions in 43 localities were awarded, 2 of the grantees did not fill their grant-funded SRO positions.

Governor Jim Gilmore initiated this growth in response to the citizen concern that arose following the tragic shooting incidents at schools in Mississippi, Arkansas and Oregon. These incidents occurred in 1997 and 1998. In October 1998, the Governor set aside $500,000 of federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program (S&DF) Grant monies for the hiring of new SROs. Thirty (30), six-month SRO positions were created, almost all of which were filled by January 1, 1999. Between January and July, 1999, therefore, DCJS staff monitored 57 SRO grants: 28 Edward G. Byrne Memorial (Byrne) grants supporting 33 SRO positions and 29 S&DF grants supporting 30 positions.

In March 1999, the Virginia General Assembly appropriated $1,000,000 in state general-fund monies for the creation of the SRO Grant Program and Trust Fund (SROGTF). The Criminal Justice Services Board was granted authority to administer the trust fund and on July 1, 1999, awarded grants that continued funding for most of the aforementioned S&DF-funded positions.

SRO funding increased once more in the wake of the April 21, 1999 shootings at Colombine High School in Colorado. Governor Gilmore allocated 1.5 million of Virginia's FY2000 Edward G. Byrne Memorial Grant allotment for the hiring of 57 more SROs. These grants were also activated on July 1, 1999, with nearly all positions filled by the start of school year 1999-2000.

By July 1, 1999, therefore, DCJS had been charged with the administration and monitoring of 111 grants supporting 119 SROs in 83 localities. The 119 SROs constitute 29% of an estimated 421 SROs in Virginia.[2]

The growth in SRO programs and positions lead the Director of the Governor's Office for Safe and Drug Free Schools to call for an evaluation of all state-funded or state-administered SRO programs. The evaluation would provide information about the implementation of local SRO programs, document SRO activities, create a database that would guide state and local program development, fulfill Commonwealth oversight responsibilities, meet federal requirements for evaluating state-administered, federally-funded programs, and provide benchmark data for the future program evaluations.

Uniqueness of the Virginia SRO Program

In addition, the evaluation would establish evaluation as an integral and ongoing part of SRO program development. Evaluation procedures that require the setting of program goals and objectives, a system for collecting evaluation data, and regular data-based feedback to practitioners, are rarely implemented during the early stages of a program's development. Although a few of the local SRO programs are 15 or more years old, most are relatively new. Only in the last year have training standards and a training curriculum been created for the professional development of SROs. The Virginia SRO Program is unique, therefore, both in its inclusion of evaluation procedures and its effort to make the position of School Resource Officer an accredited profession within law enforcement.

Scope of the Evaluation

Four major objectives were established for the evaluation:

1. To provide information about the scope and nature of school-based criminal behavior,
2. To determine the extent that students and staff are exposed to such behavior and/or are fearful of being victimized while at school,

[2] This estimate is based on a December 1999 canvass of all Virginia police departments and sheriff's offices by CPC staff.

3. To find out the opinions of school administrators and teachers regarding their school's SRO program, and
4. To obtain information about the activities SROs undertake to fulfill their roles as crime prevention specialists, instructors, law enforcers, and community liaisons.

Evaluation Resources

Manpower

To begin the evaluation process, the SPS and the Director of OGSDF retained the services of PolicyWorks, Ltd., a Richmond-based consulting firm. PolicyWorks staff generated basic designs for several evaluation instruments and compiled survey questions from other studies of school safety and security. Then, as a way of increasing evaluation resources and accessing the expertise of DCJS program and evaluation staff, the SPS and the Director of OGSDF requested assistance from DCJS' Crime Prevention Center (CPC). From this point on, the tasks of determining the evaluation's scope, creating or refining data collection instruments, developing sampling strategies, etc. became the shared responsibility of OGSDF and CPC Directors, PolicyWorks, Ltd. and CPC evaluation specialists, and the DCJS SRO Program Manager. The collection, entry, and initial analyses of data from the various reports and survey instruments was conducted by CPC evaluators.

Data Sources

The evaluation data came from three reports and two surveys that SROs submitted to DCJS as a condition of the grants funding their positions.[3]

Lessons from the Field Report (LFF)

The LFF (an annual, two-page, written report) consists of six open-ended questions. It is filled out after the school year and asks the SROs to reveal their programs, greatest accomplishments and challenges. It also solicits information on SRO policies and procedures that have proven effective and resources or training that might enhance job performance. The data from 42 completed LFF reports were available to the evaluators.

Staff Survey on School Safety and Security

The staff questionnaire (a two-sided, scannable form) solicited staff opinion about the incidence and location of school-based criminal behavior, measured staff fear of crime, and staff opinion of their school's SRO program. Data from a total of 2,067 completed surveys were used in the evaluation. A table showing the number of surveys received from various programs is presented in the appendix referred to above.

Student Incident Reports (SIR's)

The SIR (a two-sided scannable form) was developed by DCJS staff in 1996 and implemented during FY 1997-98. SROs are supposed to fill out SIR's when students (or other persons on school property) commit offenses that (if prosecuted) would violate the Code of Virginia. One SIR is filled out per offender. No written criteria to help SROs decide whether SIR's should or should not be filled out existed at the time of the evaluation. A total of 3,244 completed SIR's provided information about the frequency, time of commission, and location of school-based criminal incidents, profile data on offenders and victims, the specific offenses committed, and any actions or dispositions taken. Information about recent changes to the SIR, the limitations of SIR data, and the number of SIR's submitted by various SRO programs are contained in an Appendix available from DCJS.

[3] Copies of report forms and survey instruments may be obtained from DCJS at (804) 371-0864 or viewed on the DCJS website: webmaster@dcjs.state.va.us.

Student Survey on School Safety and Security

The student questionnaire (a one-sided scannable form) produced information about the amount and type of criminal behaviors they are exposed to and their fear of being victimized while in school or at school sponsored events. Data from 11,864 completed surveys informed the evaluation. A table showing the number of surveys received from various programs is presented in the appendix referred to above.

SRO Quarterly Activities Report (QAR)

The QAR (a four-page, written report) revealed information on the actions SROs take in the performance of various SRO roles (crime prevention specialist, law enforcer, instructor, community liaison, etc.) and on issues or factors effecting SRO program success. The data from 104 completed QAR's was available for the evaluation.

Limitations of the Data

The evaluation data was not generated from randomly selected samples of SROs, students or school staff and, thus, the evaluation findings cannot be portrayed as a reflection of SRO programming, school crime, or student and staff opinion across the Commonwealth. Rather, the data reflects the programming, school crime, student and staff opinions associated with the SRO programs funded by DCJS-monitored grants. The localities served by these programs are more rural than the localities served by the other Virginia SRO programs. Most of the DCJS-monitored programs are also newer than the other programs.

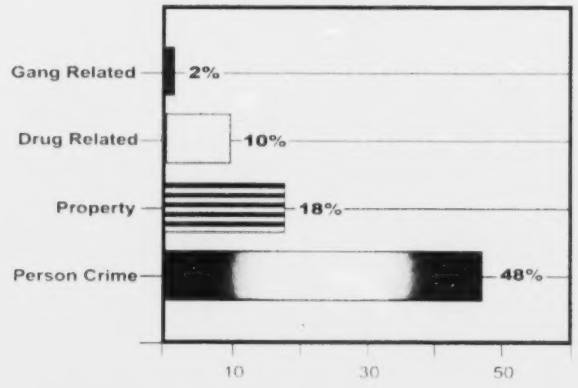
Findings from the Student Incident Report (SIR) Data[4]

School-Based Criminal Incidents - School Year 1998-99

Data from 3,244 SIR-reported incidents were entered into a database and analyzed. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the incidents occurred between September 1st and December 31st, 1998, the remainder between January 1st and June 30th, 1999. SROs were asked to report whether an incident was a person or property crime and whether it was drug or gang related. As Chart 2 shows, 48% of the incidents were crimes against persons, 18% were property crimes, 10% were drug related offenses, and only 2% were considered gang related. A substantial percentage of the incidents (e.g. profanity, truancy, and tobacco) *did not fall* into any of these categories.

Chart 2

General Classification of School Incidents



[4] Nearly all of the findings in this section are based on the SIR form implemented in Spring 1999. 1183 of these scannable forms were submitted to DCJS.

SROs were also asked to classify each incident according to the *Code* violation that incurred. Offenses accounting for at least 2% of those reported were:

19%	Possession/use Tobacco	6%	Truancy	3%	Vandalism (graffiti)
14%	Disorderly Conduct	4%	Trespassing	2%	Weapons (knives, etc)
8%	Profanity (Curse, Abuse)	4%	Possess Drugs	2%	Bomb Threat
6%	Verbal Threatening	4%	Petit/Grand Larceny		

Location of the Incidents

The offenses occurred primarily in three locations: outside the school building (31%), in classrooms (24%), and in school corridors (19%). Only 7% occurred in school bathrooms, a location that both staff and students said was a place where the probability of being victimized was substantial. The average share of incidents per middle school grade (16%) was found to be higher than that per high school grade (14%).

Offender and Victim Characteristics

Eighty-six percent (86%) of the offenders were students, 1% were staff, 5% were non-student juveniles, and 8% were unidentified. Seventy-six percent (76%) *of the student offenders* were male; 62% of the *student* offenders were high school students, 36% were middle school students, and 2% were elementary school students; 59% of the offenders had been involved in previous SIR-reported incidents. Fifty percent (50%) of all victims were female; 24% were staff members.

Actions and Dispositions Taken

Of the 3,244 incidents reported:

School-Based Actions

64%	(2077)	involved action by a principal or vice-principal,
5%	(169)	involved referral to a guidance counselor,
1%	(41)	involved referral to a social worker,
1%	(41)	involved referral to a mediation program,
1%	(20)	involved referral to a psychiatrist,
1%	(20)	involved referral to an anger management program,
1%	(16)	involved referral to a student assistance program, and
2%	(15)	involved referral to a truancy or dropout program.

Community-Based Actions

1%	(36)	involved referral for mental health or family counseling,
1%	(10)	involved referral for social services,
1%	(3)	involved referral for protective services,
1%	(3)	involved referral for victim services
1%	(3)	involved referral to a recreation or youth development program, and
1%	(1)	involved referral for domestic-violence services.

Dispositions

6%	(199)	involved placement in school detention,
50%	(1601)	involved suspension from school,
50%	(1579)	involved the filing of a criminal investigative report
38%	(1216)	involved referral to juvenile court
3%	(61)	involved referral to general district court.

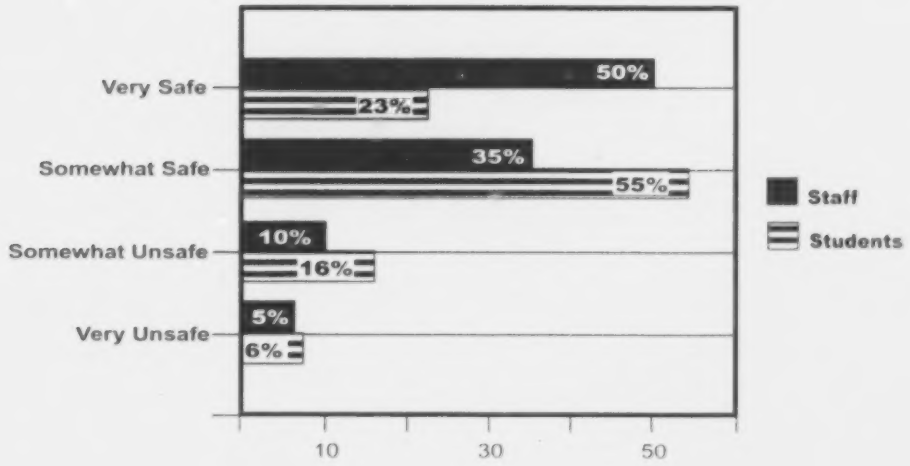
Findings from the Staff and Student Surveys

Students and staff felt generally safe in school

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the student sample and 85% of the staff sample reported feeling "somewhat" or "very" safe at school. Slightly lower feelings of safety were reported among the female and urban sub-samples of these groups. The distribution of staff and students among the four possible responses is presented in Chart 3.

Chart 3

Feelings of Safety Among Staff and Students



Staff were most concerned about intruders

Twenty-four percent (24%) of the staff were either "somewhat" or "very" fearful of being victimized by intruders. A smaller percentage reported this level of fear when they assessed the possibility of being victimized by students (11%), gang members (13%) or parents (6%).

Students and staff felt more vulnerable to crime in certain school locations

The percentages of students and staff who reported feeling "somewhat" or "very" unsafe in specific locations are as follows:

	Students	Staff
Bathrooms:	32%	17%
Parking Lot:	32%	22%
Hallways:	31%	22%
Gym/Locker Room:	25%	18%
Stairwells:	23%	22%
Stadium/Athletic Fields:	23%	19%
Cafeteria:	22%	22%
Classrooms:	11%	9%

Both staff and students feel most unsafe in places where students congregate freely and where teachers or other school staff may not be present.

Students were more exposed to criminal behavior than staff

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the students and 15% of the staff reported that, *while at school in the past six months*, they had items stolen from their desks or other places. Fourteen-percent (14%) of the staff reported property purposely damaged, and 12% reported having been threatened with physical harm. Students were questioned more extensively about their exposure to crime:

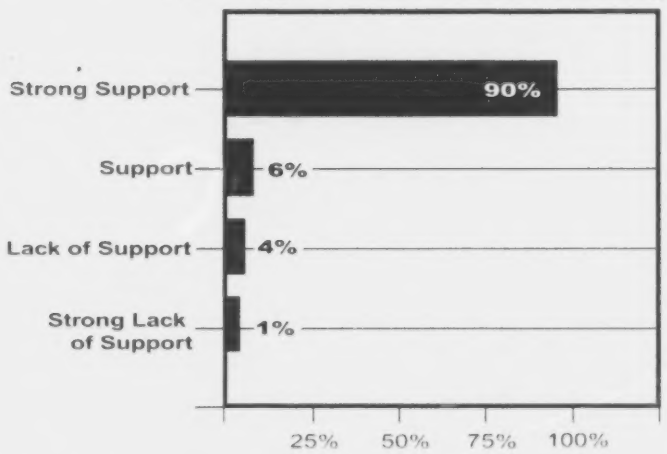
71% had seen other persons being punched, slapped, or kicked on purpose.
50% had seen other persons being threatened.
28% had been punched, slapped, or kicked on purpose
28% had personally seen someone with marijuana or another illegal drug, and
26% had personally seen someone carrying a knife or sharp instrument for protection.

Though difficult to interpret, these data suggest that students are exposed to a substantial amount of intimidating physical behavior and to behavior that may violate school and criminal strictures against drugs and weapons.

Staff strongly supported the presence of SROs

Ninety-percent (90%) of all staff reported "strong agreement" with the statement "I support having a SRO assigned to my school." Six percent (6%) simply agreed with it (see Chart 4). This level of general support was found among all sub-samples (urban, suburban, and rural, male and female, and middle school and high school). The remaining 4% expressed neutrality on the issue. In addition, most staff said they were knowledgeable about the SRO program (69%) and were satisfied with their SROs visibility (63%), availability (67%), and involvement with students (60%).

Chart 4
Staff Support of their School's SRO Program



Staff support increased as staff/SRO interaction increased

Only about 3% of the staff reported having four or more years of experience or contact with School Resource Officers. Eighty percent (80%) reported contact of two years or less, with a majority (54%) reporting contact for only one year or less. Three other measures of staff/SRO interaction were also employed:

- whether SRO has made a presentation in the staff member's class,
- whether staff heard the SRO make a presentation in a staff meeting, and
- staff member characterization of SRO contact as "regular," "occasional," or "non-existent."

These measures were cross-tabulated with three measures of program support:

- staff agreement with the idea of having an SRO assigned to their schools,
- staff opinion that the presence of the SRO has reduced fear among students, and
- whether the presence of the SRO increased student knowledge of the legal system.

The data support the hypothesis that increased contact between staff and SROs increases staff support for the presence of SROs, increases staff belief that SROs reduce fear of crime among students, and increases student knowledge of the legal system.

Findings from the QAR Data

Fifty-six SROs submitted 104 QAR's to DCJS between January 1st and June 30th 1999. The reports supplied information about activities the SROs engage in as they perform their roles as crime prevention specialists, law enforcers, instructors, and community liaisons. The reports also contained SRO estimates of the time they spend on these activities.

SROs as Crime Prevention Specialists

SROs were asked about their use of five crime prevention strategies:

- participation in or initiation of school safety audits,
- application of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles,
- development and implementation of crime prevention policies,
- intervention in conflicts before they escalate into reportable incidents, and the
- increasing citizen support for, and participation in, crime prevention activities.

School Safety Audits

Forty-eight percent (N=27) of the SROs reported participation in some type of school safety audit or security assessment. Eleven (11) did so as members of committees or "teams" that were expressly charged with this responsibility. Seven (7) described audits and assessments that were conducted on their own initiative.

Application of CPTED Principles

"With my encouragement, the administration blocked off a back entrance to the school property, instituted an enforceable parking policy, cut or trimmed trees to increase visibility of the parking lot, and increased patrols. As a result, we have fewer "outsiders" coming on to our grounds and fewer reports of theft from vehicles.

- Carroll County SRO

A CPTED application refers to any change in the physical design of a building, property, or neighborhood that is intended to reduce the probability of it being a venue for criminal behavior. 22 (39%) SROs reported a total of 30 such applications:

8 altered student or automobile traffic patterns to improve security and safety (construction of speed bumps, changes in traffic lanes, removal, addition, or redesign of parking lots, use of hallway gates during special events, and improved signage),

7 increased administrative control over who or what comes into the school (changing or addition of locks, blocking off or removal of unused entrances and installation of metal detectors),

7 increased public visibility of schoolyards, hallways, classrooms, etc. through the trimming or removal of bushes, shrubs, trees or other physical obstructions,

5 improved the visibility of security personnel and/or their ability to communicate through the installation of surveillance cameras, the addition of caller-ID or answering machines to counter bomb threats, or the acquisition of two-way radios), and

3 added or improved the lighting of school property and school events.

Enhancement of School Crime Prevention Policies

43 SROs (77%) described efforts to develop or modify school crime prevention policies. 33 policy changes were noted:

16 restricted intruder entry into schools or school-sponsored events: (9 were decisions to keep certain entrances locked at specific times, 5 established new trespass, parking-lot pass, school check-in, and participant-only policies, and 2 added security personnel at certain events or in certain places),

6 involved the creation or improvement of crisis management plans,

7 improved the school's response to bomb threats, and

3 added restrictions on the entrance of drugs, weapons, or tobacco onto school property.

SRO Intervention Efforts

"Early intervention into disputes by the SRO and hall monitors and our recommendations that those involved attend mediation meetings, has reduced the number of fights between students."

- City of Danville SRO

SROs were asked if they had resolved any problematic situations before they became reportable incidents and, if so, to describe these situations. The 89% (50) who said they had generated 76 written comments. A content analysis of these comments found 115 descriptive phrases pertaining to these non-SIR-reported conflicts:

55 (48%) identified situations where the possibility of continued or eventual violence was clear. These included nonsense or first-offense fights, threats or rumors that a fight was imminent, and "altercations," "conflicts," and "disputes" which could easily lead to fighting,

33 (29%) referred to conflicts where the potential for violence was unclear or unstated (disorderly conduct, "he-said-she-said" arguments, profanity, racial slurs, driving incidents, bullying, and the reported building of a bomb),

11	(9%)	involved truancy or runaways,
4	(3%)	concerned alcohol, drugs, or tobacco,
4	(3%)	described instances of child abuse,
3	(2%)	were suicide attempts, and
5	(3%)	depicted instances of attempted larceny, pornography, trespassing, and sexual harassment.

No criteria for identifying situations "that might become reportable incidents" were issued. SROs who had intervened in such situations, however, were asked to estimate their number. The total estimated was1585, nearly 800 interventions per quarter. Though tentative, this estimate suggests that each SRO prevent approximately 19 reportable incidents per quarter, most of which could lead to violence.

Involving Students in Crime Prevention

> **"The students are getting involved with keeping the school safe. They are reporting crimes and there have been incidents where "hardcore" teenagers have stopped other students from fighting."**
>
> *- Chesterfield County SRO*

17 SROs (30%) reported that they were working with a student committee that was charged with increasing student awareness of, and involvement in, crime prevention. These committees conducted their own safety audits, discussed and recommended CPTED applications, and increased student awareness through poster campaigns, skits, and special assemblies.

SROs as Law Enforcers[5]

> **"The reduction of fights at Northside HS is my greatest accomplishment. We have concentrated on giving young people other options besides a fighting (e.g. peer mediation) and focused Law Related Education (LRE) instruction on the eighth and ninth graders."**
>
> *- Roanoke County SRO*

Although, the QAR does not require SROs to list their law enforcement activities, descriptions of such activities were prevalent in the 36 of the 42 "Lessons from the Field" (LFF) reports that they submitted." The LFF report asks SROs to reflect on the school year and reveal their greatest accomplishments, challenges, etc. Many of the accomplishments listed on the LLF reports derived from SRO law enforcement activity and, thus, provide a partial listing thereof.

[5] A portion of the findings pertaining to SRO law enforcement activity is based on 36 annual "Lessons from the Field (LFF)" reports. The LFF report asks SROs to reflect on the school year past and describe his or her greatest accomplishments, challenges, concerns and wishes.

SROs Increased the Level of Student Supervision

Eight SROs noted their success at increasing student supervision. They increased the number of students and teachers monitoring before and after school, during cafeteria hours, at class changes, etc., initiated new or additional monitoring of after-school functions and special events, revised the timing and focus of SRO patrols, and improved communication among security personnel.

SROs Gained Entry to the Disciplinary Process

> **"Last year, I increased my level of rapport with students, parents, and school staff members. The greater rapport resulted in an increase in requests for information, advice, and other SRO assistance. At the same time, my counseling of students who had engaged in aggressive, wrongful or criminal behavior became a more integral part of the school administration's handling of incidents at the school."**
>
> *- James City County SRO*

SROs said that one of their greatest achievements during SY 1998-99 was their inclusion in school disciplinary processes. Among the consequent benefits were an increased utilization of their skills and abilities, improved access to student records, and better access to classrooms, meetings, and assemblies.

SROs Created a Means of Obtaining Crime Information

> **"Since I arrived, students have recognized that I do more than law enforcement. They trust me and discuss their problems with me. This open communication helped us make a next day arrest after a bomb threat. Students also inform me about community problems and provide information of use to other law enforcement investigators."**
>
> *- Rockingham County SRO*

Four SROs cited the benefits of creating a way that students or staff could report crime information while remaining anonymous. Three involved the installation of a special telephone line and one the creation of a "crime solvers" website.

SROs Bolstered Enforcement of Motor-Vehicle Laws

Three SROs noted improvement in the enforcement of parking rules and traffic laws.

SROs were Credited with Reducing Crime by their Mere Presence

"The administration announced that disciplinary problems during this past February (traditionally a troublesome month) were minimal, and that the only thing different about this year was the presence of the SRO"

- Amherst County SRO

Four SROs supplied evidence that their presence had reduced fighting.

Factors Affecting the SROs' Role as Law Enforcer

The QAR asks SROs about their law enforcement role and whether there are factors that facilitate or impede their ability to perform this role. Fifty-one (91%) of the SROs identified facilitating factors and 28 (50%) noted impeding factors. Fifty-eight (58) *facilitating factors* were found among the written responses. These clustered as follows:

38% (22) cited improved or on-going positive relationships with school administrators and teachers.

21% (12) noted improved communication with and cooperation from students.

11% (6) described an increase in student/staff acceptance or understanding of their role.

9% (5) credited the assistance of students, teachers, parents, school security personnel, or the community in general.

9% (5) noted resources such as private offices, private telephone lines, computers, two-way radios, or surveillance cameras.

3% (2) cited open access to students and student records.

3% (2) emphasized the strong disciplinary postures of teachers and staff.

3% (2) credited the knowledge they gained from DCJS-sponsored SRO training, and

3% (2) described the benefits of being assigned full-time to a particular school.

The impeding factors were more evenly distributed. Of 32 comments volunteered:

22% (7) described an overly protective attitude on behalf of teachers or administrators (SRO not informed of all incidents, SROs not permitted to interview students, etc.).

16% (5) argued that school's administrators did not utilize them as they should or seemed confused about the role they were to play.

16% (5) cited the physical layout of the school or the lack of certain resources (no private office, adequate telephone system, etc.),

16% (5) said that the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado created an unusual and sometimes unreasonable level of fear among students, staff, parents, etc., and

16% (5) pointed to a lack of support from certain parties (parents, minority students, Chiefs of Police, Juvenile Intake Officer, and local authorities).

The remaining factors included unease caused by the SROs uniform, the negative stereotyping of police, failure of students to "snitch," and having to serve only part-time.

SROs as Instructors of Law Related Education (LRE) Classes

Between January 1 and June 30, 1999, grant-supported SROs in 39 localities conducted 225 LRE classes. Attendance in these classes, some of which were school assemblies, averaged 123 persons per class. Thirty-six (16%) of the classes were attended by school staff and 18 (6%) were attended by parents or legal guardians. The most frequently presented classes were as follows:

31% (70) were "class action" or juvenile law classes where SROs explain the definition of crime, the laws that apply to students, and the workings of the juvenile justice system,

14% (32) were classes on motor vehicle laws, of traffic safety, and the problems caused by persons who drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI),

12% (26) were classes on laws governing the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and tobacco,

10% (22) were classes on school safety and the role played by SROs,

8% (17) were on constitutional rights regarding search and seizure, the right to a fair trial, the right to be represented by an attorney, etc.,

3% (6) were classes on sexual harassment and rape,

2% (5) were classes on careers in law enforcement,

2% (4) were classes on the problem of school violence and bullying, and

21% (47) were miscellaneous classes (gangs, crime scenes, courts, shoplifting, crime prevention, child abuse, vandalism, hate crimes, etc.).

These classes are proof that the SROs have been active participants in the educational process, imparting knowledge and information that are generally unavailable in middle and high school classrooms.

SRO as School/Community Liaisons

SROs operate as practitioners of community-oriented policing and, therefore, are expected to utilize as many school and community resources as appropriate in the resolution of conflicts. While the SROs were not required to report their use of school or community resources in SIR-reported incidents, they were so required when asked about non-SIR-reported conflicts. In dealing with the latter, the SROs estimated that they made 2,043 referrals or consults with the following school or community resource persons:

School Referrals/Consults (N=1288)		Community Referrals/Consults (N=755)	
43%	guidance counselor	6%	protective services
5%	social worker	6%	social services
5%	psychologist	14%	mental health/family counseling
24%	conflict mediation program	6%	victim services
7%	anger management program	54%	juvenile court
8%	truancy/dropout programs	3%	domestic violence services
5%	student assistance program	10%	recreation/youth development program
3%	other	1%	other
100%		100%	

The fact that the percentages for 9 of the 14 identified services were 10% or less suggests that SROs may not be actively involved in the referral of students to school or community resources. The data is difficult to interpret; however, as it is unclear if many localities offer this range of services. SRO use of school/community resources in both SIR and non-SIR incidents will be examined in future evaluations.

The Allocation of SRO Resources

The QAR asks SROs to estimate the time they spend on various SRO tasks. The SROs must fill in blanks beside eleven listed tasks with the percentages of time they usually spend on these tasks in a normal workweek. The averages of the percentages listed on 98 QARS are as follows:

18%	Investigations of incidents
27%	Patrol/Security of school
8%	Meetings/conferences (school staff, parents, social workers, etc.)
4%	School safety/security assessments
9%	Law-related Education
9%	Student involvement/activities/projects
6%	Court
10%	Reports and other paperwork
4%	Training
4%	Non-SRO assignments
1%	Other (specify):
100%	

Conclusions

The evaluation findings should be viewed as preliminary. Most of the SROs who supplied data were relatively inexperienced as SROs and as administrators of newly created or revised reports and survey instruments. Furthermore, the period of SRO activity evaluated was one of rapid program growth and one in which the concept of the SRO was evolving. This growth and the concurrent efforts of state-level managers to develop program training standards, organize and conduct SRO training sessions, create model program policies and procedures, etc., make these findings but a snapshot of Virginia SRO programming in transition.

On the other hand, the evaluation is a credible assessment of grant-funded, state-administered SRO programming in the first half of 1999. First, the project's staff and consultants were experienced evaluators who worked hard to develop valid, reliable, measures of school-based crime, staff/student opinion, and local SRO programming activity. Second, the evaluation data was both quantitative and qualitative and the findings from

these two types of data complemented one another. Those based on quantitative sources confirmed or reinforced those based on qualitative sources. Third, the sheer volume of the evaluation data ensured its robustness and reduced the probability that the findings are specious or invalid.

The evaluation data revealed that a wide range of criminal behavior takes place in Virginia middle schools and high schools. The frequency of this crime, yet to be accurately measured, appears to be low in most schools covered by the evaluation. And although the great majority of students and staff report feeling safe in school, the level of concern or fear of being victimized in these groups (particularly in certain locations) is not insignificant.

The idea of using SROs to increase school security, initiate school crime prevention efforts, improve staff and student understanding of juvenile law, etc. was strongly endorsed by the 2067 staff polled during the evaluation. Although the actual impact of SRO programming on the amount and seriousness of school crime cannot be measured for several years, the staff survey, quarterly activities reports, and "lessons from the field" reports provided evidence that the impact is positive.

SROs are actively pursuing the goals and objectives associated with their designated roles. They are participating in school security assessments, applying CPTED principles to reduce the probability of crime, developing school crime prevention policies (critical incident, weapons, intruder, etc.), instructing law-related education classes, intervening in conflicts before they involve *Code* violations, increasing the level of student supervision, counseling troubled students, developing crime information networks, and involving students and staff in crime prevention activities.

The evaluation also found that SROs are gaining acceptance as players in school disciplinary processes and are using school and community resources for resolving conflict, aiding victims, and reducing the destructive impulses of at-risk youth.

While some SROs noted factors that impeded their efforts to perform certain roles and functions, the staff survey provided evidence that SRO acceptance and inclusion increases as the frequency and longevity of SRO contact increases. In sum, Virginia's grant-funded, state-administered SRO programming was found to be increasingly professional, strongly endorsed by students and staff, and vitally active as a force against school-based crime.

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